

Pensioner's Rebates at COJ: 2024/2025 Financial Year

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INTRODUCTION

In our last article about pensioners' rebates in March 2024, the criteria for pensioner's rebates for the 2023/2024 financial year was discussed at length.

On 1 July 2024, COJ released its new requirements for pensioners' rebates for the 2024/2025 financial year, beginning on 1 July 2024 and ending on 30 June 2025. This update deals with the current financial year requirements (valid until 30 June 2025).

WHAT IS A PENSIONERS' REBATE?

A rates rebate is a discount which is applied to the amounts of residential property rates that you pay to the municipality each month for your property ownership. Certain registered property owners located within the COJ can apply for Pensioners' Rebate.

In order to qualify for a Pensioners' Rebate, property owners must meet specific requirements, as prescribed by the municipality, which will be amended from time to time.

Since the requirements change yearly, it is advised that members of the public check the current requirements before applying for a rebate. If an applicant has already applied, they are advised to keep checking if the requirements have changed, as they may be required to reapply, or might no longer qualify for the rebate.

NB: It is not safe to assume that just because you applied and might have qualified in prior years, you do not need to re-apply or re-prove your compliance again this current financial year. According to the latest application forms released by the COJ, these forms will be valid until 30 June 2027. However we caution all of our clients and members of the public to check the requirements every financial year to see whether they changed from the prior year, and whether the forms that the COJ is using or that you find on the internet are the current forms for the financial year in particular.

CATEGORIES OF PENSIONERS

There are three categories of rebates that pensioners can apply for.

Pensioners from 60-69 years

1. You can qualify for a 100% rebate of rates charges for your property if you earn less than R 12 474 per month, but have a property which has a market value of less or equal to R 1.5 million.
2. You can qualify for a 50% rebate of rates charges for your property if you earn more than R 12 474 but less than or equal to R 21 382, and have a property which has a market value of less or equal to R 1.5 million.
3. Should a pensioner earn more than R 21 382 per month, then they will not qualify for a rebate.
4. The pensioner to whom the rate is granted and who is the owner of the property, must personally be in occupation of the property.
5. Pensioners who own property that is in a long-term lease can apply for the rebate.
6. The rebate can only apply to the following types of properties:
 - Residential properties;
 - Farm properties used for residential purposes; and
 - Smallholdings used for residential purposes.
7. A pensioner rebate will only apply to only one property per pensioner or pensioner and their spouse.

Pensioners from 70 years onwards

You can qualify for a 100% rebate on rates, irrespective of income, up to a R 2 million market value of your property. Rates will be levied on the market value in excess of R 2 million. But you must also meet the following criteria:

1. The pensioner to whom the rate is granted and who is the owner of the property, must personally be in occupation of the property.
2. Pensioners who own property that is in a long-term lease can apply for the rebate.

3. The rebate can only apply to the following types of properties:
 - Residential properties;
 - Farm properties used for residential purposes; and
 - Smallholdings used for residential purposes.
4. A pensioner rebate will only apply to only one property per pensioner or pensioner and their spouse.

Owners dependant on pensions due to injury on duty

This rebate applies to owners of properties who are dependent on pensions due to injuries that were sustained on duty.

The following criteria must be met for such a pensioner's rebate to be effected:

1. The residential property must consist of one dwelling. An applicant will not qualify for the pensioner rebate if there is more than one dwelling and the other dwellings can be rented out.
2. The applicant must have been injured on duty in serving in the following services:
 - 2.1 South African National Defence Force;
 - 2.2 South African Police Service;
 - 2.3 Emergency Services; and
 - 2.4 The Johannesburg Metropolitan Police.
3. The applicant must own and occupy the property.
4. The market value threshold is R 1.5 million. Rates will be levied on the market value in excess of R 1.5 million.

Pensioners who receive a National Security Grant

According to the forms for pensioners aged 60-69, pensioners who receive a national security grant will receive a rebate of 100% up to the maximum property threshold (currently R 1,5m for pensioners in this age bracket).

APPLICATION PROCESS

A pensioner's rebate is not automatically applied to pensioners who are owners of property. An applicant must complete and submit a prescribed application form, applicable to their category, along all supporting documentation. For the current financial year, which runs from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2027, the pensioner rebate forms are available from customer service centres, the City's website (https://joburg.org.za/services_/Pages/City%20Services/Rebates/Pensioner-rebates.aspx) or can be requested via email by sending a request for a form to ratescomments@joburg.org.za. According to the forms applicable for the present financial year, applications may not be submitted by email and must be submitted in person at a COJ walk in service centre.

FORMS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS STARTING 1 JULY 2024 AND RUNNING UNTIL 30 JUNE 2027

Pensioners who wish to apply for the rebate will need to present and attach the following documentation and information:

60-69 years old

1. A certified application pensioner rebate form which has been signed by a commissioner of oaths (the commissioner stamp should not be older than 3 months).
2. A certified copy of your South African Identity Document.
3. A certified copy of your pension card (back and front) or your SAASA card.
4. A bank statement for the last three months (bank stamped).
5. Proof of income or copy of your certified SASSA card or other proof of income which will be applicable to the Council.
6. Death certificate in the case of a deceased property co-owner.
7. The most recent income tax assessment issued by the South African Revenue Service.
8. If you are the recipient of a national security grant, you will need your pension security grant reference number.

70 years old or older

You will only need to present a certified copy of your South African Identity Document, but you must ensure that your pensioner's rebate application form is signed by a commissioner of oath (the commissioner stamp should not be older than 3 months).

The application forms can be submitted as follows:

1. At your nearest Customer Services centre.
2. Via email at ratescomments@joburg.org.za.
3. Mailed to: Rates and taxes (Rebates) P.O Box 5000, Johannesburg 2000.

Owners dependant on Pensions due to injury on duty

The owner of the property must apply at the Customer Service Centre with the following documents:

1. A certified pensioner rebate application form signed by a commissioner of oaths (the commissioner stamp should not be older than 3 months).
2. Confirmation from the employer that the employee was injured on duty and due to the injuries, they can no longer serve in any capacity.
3. Medical records that confirm the injuries sustained by the applicant.
4. Proof of current income.

- Where the pensioner is married, a copy of their spouse's proof of income.

WHAT HAPPENS ONCE MY PENSIONER'S REBATE IS APPROVED?

On approval of the application for a pensioner's rebate, a discount on the monthly rates will be payable as mentioned above. The rebate will only be effected from the date of the application. Therefore an applicant will not get any discounts from the months prior to the submitted application.

DISABILITY GRANT

Owners who have a disability may apply for a rebate, provided that the following criteria may apply:

- The residential property must consist of one dwelling.
- The property owner is permanently disabled and is not older than 59 years of age.
- The owner must own and live on the residential property.
- The market value threshold of the property must be at least R 1.5. million.

The owner of the property must apply for the rebate at their nearest Customer Service Centre, with a copy of the application form completed and signed by a commissioner of oaths, along with the following supporting documents:

- Medical records which verify the owner's disability.
- Proof of current income.
- Spouse's proof of income, where the applicant is married.

The rebate will be granted for the maximum duration of the current Valuation roll and must be renewed every 4-5 years.

The rebate will be granted from the date of the application and the owner will not get any discounts for the months prior to the application.

WHEN CAN I APPLY?

The COJ financial year runs from 1 July to 30 June of every subsequent year. Applicants are advised to submit their application and supporting documents in advance of the financial year so that their application is filed before the new financial year is in effect. This ensures that qualified persons are able to get the maximum benefit of their application and the rebate will be effected on the first day of the new financial year.

Should a person apply late (i.e. after the commencement of the new financial year), your rebate will only kick in

from the date of the application. The rebate cannot be backdated to a date prior to the date of the application.

RENEWING A PENSIONER'S REBATE APPLICATION

In the past the COJ indicated that an application to renew a pensioner rebate must be done before the beginning of a new Valuation Roll (every 4-5 years). However, the COJ has changed this requirement recently and its latest set of forms refers to the rebate, once granted, as being valid from 1 July 2023 up to 30 June 2027 (the duration of the 2023 General Valuation Roll).

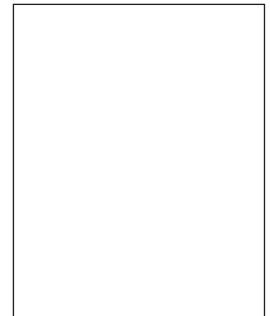
As a result, pensioners who were granted rebates during the 2023/2024 financial year are not required to reapply. Their rate will remain valid for the duration of the valuation roll (General Valuation Roll 2023) which ends on 30 June 2027.

CONCLUSION

The COJ encourages all pensioners, 60 years and older to apply for the pensioner's rebate. Such a rebate is intended to provide financial relief for pensioners who are owners of residential properties.



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